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RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0521  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0426  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0534  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4247  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2536  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0560  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7451  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000661

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN, EXBS FOR JEFF HARTSHORN, T (TIM KATSAPIS)

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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KNNP](#) [UZ](#)  
SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: EQUIPMENT DELIVERY WILL ASSIST BORDER SECURITY EFFORTS, POSSIBLY INCLUDING AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Deputy Chief of Mission and Emboffs provided Uzbekistan's State Customs Committee with radioisotope identification devices worth approximately 90,000 USD during a June 6 ceremony at the Higher Military Customs Institute in Tashkent. Deputy Customs Chairman Rustam Mansurov expressed his deep gratitude to the United States for the equipment that will assist Uzbekistan's efforts to enhance border security and prevent the spread of narcotics and items of proliferation concern. Customs officials then provided a tour of the state-of-the-art facility--which has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in U.S. assistance--describing how personnel are selected and trained, what equipment they use, and what changes Customs is implementing. The officials also appeared receptive to assisting their Afghan counterparts. We were impressed with the quality of the institute and the expertise of the officials present. The event underscores the value of the Export Control and Related Border Security program in furthering our mutual counterproliferation interests, and the investment in equipment and training is sure to provide additional dividends down the road as more personnel are trained at this academy. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Deputy Chief of Mission and Emboffs visited the Higher Military Customs Institute on June 6 to deliver ten Aspect MKC-A03 radioisotope identification devices (RIIDs), provided by the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program, to Uzbekistan's State Customs Committee. The hand-held RIIDs, each worth approximately 9,000 USD, will boost Customs officers' ability to detect radioactive materials of proliferation concern. Deputy Customs Chairman Rustam Mansurov welcomed the DCM and Emboffs to the

institute, thanking them on behalf of Customs leadership for the devices as well as millions of dollars in EXBS-provided equipment in recent years. Mansurov assured the U.S. side that all U.S.-provided equipment is used regularly, and that it plays an important role in Uzbekistan's counternarcotics and counterterrorism efforts. He also remarked that about 50 Customs officials have received training in the United States, and expressed hope that cooperation and interaction with the United States will grow.

13. (SBU) The Deputy Chief of Mission noted that the handover ceremony was the latest in a series of Embassy/EXBS equipment deliveries to the academy that have taken place in recent years, and described the many types of technical equipment--including computers, projectors, radiation and metal detectors, Product Acoustic Signature Systems, and Geiger Counters--the institute has received. The DCM said that with each piece of specialized equipment comes training, and hailed the institute as the perfect place for such training. He said that the United States has been pleased and proud to cooperate with Uzbekistan in counterterrorism and counternarcotics, and expressed hope that cooperation between the United States Government and the Government of Uzbekistan will continue in support of our mutual goals.

#### A Tour of the Higher Military Customs Institute

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14. (SBU) Customs officials then escorted the DCM and Emboffs on a tour of the Higher Military Customs Institute. A  
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Customs official explained that this is a relatively new institute that had opened in 2003, and that while Customs has a total personnel strength of roughly 4,000, only 125 personnel from one class have received a degree from this academy so far. Officials noted that most students undergo a four-year program, and currently about 500 students (including about 20 women) study at the academy. The second class will graduate at the end of June. A highly selective institute, some 20 applicants apply for each available slot, and the institute accepts students based on their intelligence and physical condition. Emboffs strode across pristine marble floors, with a massive blown-up photograph of President Karimov--lifting a Customs official off the ground in a bear hug--adorning one wall.

15. (SBU) The officials showed Emboffs a series of rooms and laboratories replete with computers, life-size mock-ups of Customs registration booths, and even a fully functional Yantar-1P Aspect radiation portal monitor. In some cases they pointed out equipment that had been provided by EXBS, and praised how it helps Customs to fulfill its objectives. Some of the institute's instructors are visiting specialists and others have been recruited from universities in Tashkent.

#### Details on Customs Training

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16. (SBU) Customs officials explained that students are separated into Russian-speaking and Uzbek-speaking groups for training. (The Russian group is smaller, one said.) The institute also organizes trips to the theater and elsewhere to improve the language skills of students who are having difficulties with Russian, and does the same for those who have trouble with Uzbek. The officials also said that each training week has recently been lengthened from 36 hours to 48 hours per week, and that many other changes are going into effect in Customs. The officials noted that the institute offers three kinds of training: the standard four-year program, shorter three-month training courses, and refresher training for experienced personnel. Some of the training is computer based, and the officials demonstrated sophisticated UNODC-developed software with activities corresponding to real-life situations.

17. (C) The institute also uses real-life examples of how

Uzbekistan has interdicted radioactive materials in their training courses, the officials continued. One official explained that sometimes smugglers will hide items of proliferation concern with large quantities of naturally irradiated materials during attempts to cross points of entry, and noted that Customs once found such an item hidden in the center of a truck.

¶18. (SBU) They remarked that the Vice President of the World Customs Organization recently visited the Customs institute, and so their academy may gain international status soon. The officials also appeared receptive to the DCM's suggestion that the institute train Afghan counterparts.

¶19. (SBU) The officials then showed Emboffs the institute's sports center, gymnasiums, swimming pool, track, teahouse, and library. The library has more than 2000 digital books, which the institute selected and then contracted out to be

digitized. Selected items in the library, which included a book and video entitled "Visit to America" about President Karimov's 2002 trip to the United States, prominently displayed photos of President Bush meeting with President Karimov.

#### Combating the Circulation of Fake Currency

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¶10. (SBU) Customs also trains its personnel to find counterfeit currency, including U.S. dollars. The officials noted that all points-of-entry in Uzbekistan are equipped with fake currency detectors. They said that some people from Morocco who were producing fake currency were apprehended in Tashkent about two weeks ago. The officials said that Customs generally interrogates those who are involved in such activities, starts a case, and then forwards the case to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security Service, or General Prosecutor's Office, depending on which law was broken.

Comment:

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¶11. (C) We were impressed not only with the quality of the Higher Military Customs Institute, but also the expertise of the Customs officials we interacted with, who ably answered our many questions on Customs operations and training. The training and equipment that EXBS has provided is making an impact on Uzbekistan's ability to detect and interdict items of proliferation concern, and the dividends are sure to grow as additional personnel are trained here. This institute also has the potential to contribute to enhancing the security of Afghanistan's borders if the Government of Uzbekistan does indeed permit training of Afghan counterparts here.

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